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BIOBIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA FOR
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A. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Manuscript Source Materials on Life

   (a) Radcliffe College, Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America contains 62 items including correspondence; biographical material; clippings; photographs; papers relating to childhood, student life; work as administrator for American Foundation for the Blind; travel to Far East, other activities; the library contains unpublished inventory.

   Item 73-854 in NUC of Manuscript Collections (199)

   (b) The American Academy of Arts and Letters Library (N.Y.) contains 60 items of correspondence from Helen Keller relating to the institution.

   Item 61-2127 in NUC of Manuscript Collections (199)

2. Published Sources on Life

   See attached bibliography.

3. Source of good published likeness:

   The best collection of photographs of Helen Keller, her family, and her friends is The Three Lives of Helen Keller by Richard Harrity and Ralph G. Martin (item #86 in bibliography).

4. Surviving Descendents

   The New York Times obituary, June 2, 1968, listed Helen Keller's surviving relatives as her brother Phillip B. Keller of Dallas, Texas, and her sister, Mrs. Mildred Tyson of Montgomery, Alabama. Neither of these names, however, is listed in the 1975 telephone directories of their respective cities.

B. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Ancestry and Parentage

Father: Arthur H. Keller, a captain in the Confederate army (86)(13)(110) descended from Caspar Keller, native of Switzerland, who settled in Maryland (86)(13) and from General Alexander Spotswood, Royal Governor of Virginia 1710-1722 (204); a cousin of General Robert E. Lee (86); published the local Tuscumbia, Alabama, newspaper the North Alambian (86)(193); appointed Marshall of North Alabama by President Cleveland (86)(193); married twice, his first wife died leaving him two grown sons (86); married second wife, Kate Adams, who bore him two daughters and a son (86)(13)

"He was a man strongly attached to his family, of true Southern hospitality, a famous teller of anecdotes; his garden and trees were sources of constant delight to him." (110)(13)(86)

"My earliest distinct recollection of my father is making my way through great drifts of newspapers to his side and finding him alone, holding a sheet of paper before his face." (13)

Mother: Kate Adams, second wife of Arthur H. Keller, and twenty years his junior; (86)(110) distantly related to Edward Everett (86)(13) and Edward Everett Hale (13).

"Mrs. Keller watched over the pigs, turkeys, chickens, and sheep, and had a county reputation for curing hams. But her special love was an old-fashioned garden that became a paradize for her three children yet to be born..."(86)

"How shall I (Helen) write of my mother? She is so near to me that it almost seems indelicate to speak of her." (13)

2. Birth

Born Helen Adams Keller on June 27, 1880 in Tuscumbia, Alabama (86)(189)(194)(110).

Child was originally intended to be christened "Helen Everett" after her maternal grandmother, "but the forgetful father, hurrying to church, gave the child his wife's maiden name, 'Helen Adams'"(86)(13)

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"The baby Helen was a strong, assertive child, quick, imitative, and precocious in learning to speak" (110) (86); at six months could say "How d'ye" and "tea, tea, tea" and her favorite word "wah-wah" for water (193) (86)(13); walked at age one year (86)(13)(193).

"The beginning of my life was simple and much like every other little life. I came, I saw, I conquered, as the first baby in the family always does."(13)

Siblings

Two older half-brothers by her father's first wife (86)(13)

Two younger siblings: a sister, Mildred Keller Tyson and a brother, Phillips B. Keller, the youngest Keller child (206)

Economic and Social Position of Family

Captain Keller owned large estate but was "land poor" and could not afford proper care for Helen (193); an "intermittently prosperous country gentleman"(206);

3. Early Life

Helen was a normal, healthy baby until Feb. 1882 when at the age of 19 months she was suddenly stricken with a near-fatal illness (189)(195)(110)(193) diagnosed as "acute congestion of the stomach and brain"(110)(86) (13)(192), later speculated to be scarlet fever (189). The illness left quickly, but destroyed Helen's sight and hearing, discovered when "she did not respond to the loud ringing of a bell or close her eyes when her mother dressed or bathed her"(68)(86).

"These happy days (of normal childhood) did not last long. One brief spring, musical with the song of robin and mockingbird, one summer rich in fruit and roses, one autumn of gold and crimson sped by and left their gifts at the feet of an eager, delighted child. Then in the dreary month of February, came the illness which closed my eyes and ears and plunged me into the unconsciousness of a newborn baby...Gradually I got used to the silence and darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different."(13)

"Her infancy and early childhood were a succession of days of frustration, manifest by outbursts of anger and fractious behavior;"(206) "...in her aimless dayless life,

she was deaf, blind and unable to speak, a small wild animal, violent and stubborn, given to spasms of baffled rage, whose family were often bruised by her assaults. She was a dangerous adversary...whom no one knew how to control, snatching whatever she chose from the dishes on the table and throwing herself in fury on the floor." (68)

No doctor was able to help Helen (86)(68)(110); in 1886, a famous oculist, Dr. Chisholm of Baltimore, while maintaining that recovery was hopeless, suggested to Helen's parents the possibility of educating her; Chisholm recommended consultation with Dr. Alexander Graham Bell who in turn urged parents to contact Michael Anagnos, head of Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston, about securing a teacher for Helen. (13)(110)(86)(68)(193)(206); Anagnos sent Miss Anne Sullivan, aged 20, to the Kellers; arrived in Tuscumbia, March 3, 1887, when Helen was seven years old (193)(110)(13)(67).

Anne Sullivan

"The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects."(13)

Anne Mansfield Sullivan "had a childhood of horror (86); parents were poverty-stricken Irish immigrants who abused her; after mother died, father sent Anne and brother Jimmie to Massachusetts poor house where Jimmie died and Anne grew almost totally blind; transfer to Perkins Institute after four years provided education, including knowledge of manual alphabet from deaf and blind Laura Bridgman, and operations which partially restored her sight; graduated from Perkins Institute as class valedictorian, accepting position of teacher for Helen Keller with reluctance and apprehension (86)(68)(67).

"Here I was, twenty years old, and I realized that I didn't know a single subject thoroughly. I could not possibly teach and I had no urge to teach. I knew better than I had six years ago how abysmal my ignorance was." (86)(67)

Education

After finding it futile to work with Helen within the family unit, Miss Sullivan stayed alone with Helen for

two weeks in an adjacent house; during this period, Helen submitted to Miss Sullivan's discipline and instruction (86)(67)(68)(13).

"Within a month, the vixen, the furious little termagant, had been transformed into a gentle child, contentedly stringing her beads and serenely crocheting..." (68)

Helen made the association between hand language and physical reality when she grasped the understanding that "w-a-t-e-r" represented the substance Miss Sullivan was pumping over her hand (13)(67)(68)(206): "As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten--a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away." (13)

In 1890, Helen began to study oral speech with Miss Sarah Fuller, principal of Horace Mann School for the Deaf, in Boston (86)(13)(193); in 1894 began attending the Wright-Humason Oral School in New York for two years taking advanced lessons in oral speech and lip-reading (86)(206)(193): "She still had a toneless voice. When she read aloud, her speech lacked variety and modulation, registering with too much breath in two or three middle tones." (86)

Entered Cambridge School for Young Ladies in October, 1896, to prepare for college (13)(86)(193) where "for the first time in my life, I enjoyed the companionship of seeing and hearing girls of my own age." (13) Withdrawn from school by Mrs. Keller in 1898 after dispute between Miss Sullivan and Mr. Gilman, principal of the school (13)(68); Remainder of college preparation was private tutoring under Mr. Merton S. Keith, of Cambridge (13).

Entered Radcliffe College in 1900 (13)(86)(193), motivated "because they didn't want me at Radcliffe and I was stubborn by nature (86)(13); elected vice-president of freshman class (193); graduated with B.A. in 1904 cum laude (193)(86).

Other honorary educational degrees awarded:

1931	D.H.L.	Temple University
1932	LL.D.	University of Glasgow, Scotland
1951	LL.D.	University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
1955	Litt.D.	University of Delhi
1955	M.D.	Free University of Berlin
1955	LL.D.	Harvard

(203)

4. Religion

Helen was converted early in life to the New Church Doctrines of the mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg (68)(206)(7); the essence of the faith was "that the essence of divine life is love and that men are dead unless they are animated by it." (68) In this area she differed from Anne Sullivan who possessed no religious convictions (68)(67)(14).

5. Marriage

Helen Keller never married, although was encouraged to do so by Alexander Bell, wished to do so ("All women should marry, if they can get men to marry them" (86), and was once engaged (86)(206)(6)(68);

Fell in love in 1916 with 29-year-old Socialist Peter Fagan who was acting as her temporary secretary; they took out marriage license and planned secret wedding, but newspapers broke story and Mrs. Keller broke up the pair (6)(68)(206).

6. Positions Held

Counselor on national and international relations for the American Foundation for the Blind (203);

Counselor on national and international relations for the American Foundation for the Overseas Blind (203);

Appointed to Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (86).

7. Chief Accomplishments

Instigated the first state commission for the blind (193);

Lecturer, fundraiser, lobbiest, and writer on behalf of blind; toured U.S., Australia, Canada, Egypt, France,

Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Italy, Japan, Yugoslavia, Korea, Monchukup, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, and South Rhodesia (203).

"Especially in the early decades of the twentieth century, lectures and the example of her life did a great deal to educate an ignorant public about the problems and potentialities of the blind." (189)

8. Writings

[illegible] and [illegible] by Helen [illegible].

9. Honors (partial list)

1.	Achievement Prize Pictorial Review	1931
2.	Order of St. Sava, Yugoslavia	1931
3.	Roosevelt Medal	1936
4.	Gold Key, National Education Association	1938
5.	Scroll of Honor for pioneer work in relief of handicapped--International Federation of Women's Clubs	1941
6.	W.U.S. Achievement Certificate	1949
7.	Award of Director General, Lions International	1951
8.	Destinguished Service Medal from American Association of Workers for the Blind	1951
9.	National Humanitarian Award, Variety Clubs International	1951
10.	Gold Medal, National Institute of Scocial Sciences	1952
11.	Meritorius Service Award, National Rehabilitation Association	1952
12.	Medal of Merit (Lebanon)	1952
13.	Chevalier Legion of Honor (France)	1952
14.	Southern Cross (Brazil)	1953
15.	Award for best feature length documentary film / National Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences	1955
16.	Presidential Medal of Freedom	1964
17.	Golden Plate Award / American Academy of Achievement	1965

(203)

10. Death

Died June 1, 1968 in Westport, Conn. (195)(189)(193); funeral services held in National Cathedral in Washington (206).

11. Inconsistencies in facts, dates, etc.

(a) Encyclopedia Britannica (194) states that Helen Keller was "born blind, deaf, and mute;" all other sources state that loss of sight and hearing occurred after illness at 19 months;

(b) Encyclopedia Britannica states that Miss Keller died in Easton, Connecticut.

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